

## Records of rare or previously unrecorded birds from Colombia

by Michael Gochfeld, Stuart Keith, Paul Donahue

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During a month-long visit to Colombia, January–February 1977, M.G. and S.K. were impressed by the large number of birds observed for which there were no previously published Colombian records. These records were primarily of waterbirds observed incidentally while travelling from one forest or fauna to another, and were not the results of a planned search or survey. Combined with records obtained by P.D. during more extensive field work a clearer picture has emerged concerning the status and regularity of certain species. Clearly much remains to be discovered about the birds of coastal Colombia, and visitors interested mainly in seeing Neotropical exotics and Colombia endemics, are urged not to overlook the more familiar gulls and terns.

Most of the records reported here are from the Caribbean coast between Baranquilla and Santa Marta, from the harbour at Cartagena, and on the Pacific Coast from the harbour at Buenaventura. Very few, if any, are surprising, nearly all representing species already recorded from the waters of adjacent countries or known to be extending their ranges.

### NON-RESIDENT SPECIES

#### DICHROMANASSA RUFESCENS *Reddish Egret*

M.G. and S.K. observed a white-phased bird feeding in mangroves near the town of Cienaga, 1 km west of the inlet to Cienaga Grande on 19 January. The species was not known from Colombia until 1974 when P.D. discovered it at Isla Salamanca (Donahue 1977). He observed several individuals during a series of visits between 30 June and 19 August and also found 4 on the Guajira peninsula on 7 August. Over 100 (both colour phases) were seen at the Manaure salt works on the Guajira Peninsula, 26–27 June 1974 (Alexander Sprunt IV). The species has been recorded in Colombia in January, June, July and August, so it may well be resident (rather than just a casual wanderer), particularly on the Guajira. It has been considered a winter resident (August–May) on the coast of Venezuela and the Netherlands Antilles (Meyer de Schauensee *et al.* 1978). Whether it has recently spread to Colombia from Venezuela or was simply undetected in the past, is not known.

#### STERCORARIUS sp. *Parasitic(?) Jaeger*

P.D. observed 2 immature jaegers in Santa Marta harbour, 3 July 1974. M.G. and S.K. observed an immature bird, lacking elongated central tail feathers, in Cartagena harbour, 21 January 1977. Young jaegers are notoriously difficult to identify, but the slender proportions and small size (the bird in Cartagena was the size of the Laughing Gulls *Larus atricilla* with which it was seen) rule out Pomarine Jaeger *S. pomarinus*. The Long-tailed Jaeger (*S. longicaudus*) is chiefly an offshore bird, so Parasitic Jaeger *S. parasiticus* is most probable. The species is not yet reported from Venezuela (Meyer de Schauensee *et al.* 1978), but E. Eisenmann has examined 3 specimens from the Pacific coast of Panama which he identified as first or second

year Parasitic Jaegers, using the criteria of Walter (1962). Walter showed that earlier published sight records of both Parasitic and Long-tailed Jaegers from the Caribbean coast of Panama, based on criteria currently used for separating the two, both in the field and in the hand, were unreliable.

#### STERCORARIUS POMARINUS *Pomarine Jaeger*

Denham (1972) reports seeing a Pomarine Jaeger in Cartagena harbour in February 1972. P.D. observed this species on 7 dates between 3 and 31 July 1974 in Santa Marta harbour with a maximum of 8 on 3 July (with 2 probable immature Parasitic Jaegers – see above), all in immature plumage. Meyer de Schauensee *et al.* (1978) consider this species common in winter off the Venezuelan coast (December to March, with one September occurrence), but the July dates are of unusual interest.

#### LARUS ARGENTATUS *Herring Gull*

Donahue (1977) reported an immature at Isla Salamanca, 20 January 1975. M.G. and S.K. observed at least 3 in the uniform mottled pale-brown second winter plumage, near the docks and in the harbour at Cartagena, 21 and 22 January 1977. This species is continuing to extend its breeding range southward in North America and has recently increased during the winter in the West Indies (Buckley & Buckley 1970) and in Panama (Wetmore 1965), from where Wetmore lists 3 ringing recoveries, all of first winter birds, while E. Eisenmann notes that there are other sight records from both coasts of Panama.

In addition we find the following records for South America:— a second year bird on Trinidad, 1959 (French 1973); a specimen taken on Isla de Aves off the coast of Venezuela (Meyer de Schauensee *et al.* 1978); a sight record for Los Roques off the Venezuelan coast (Meyer de Schauensee *et al.* 1978); a first year bird seen on Trinidad, 3 October 1976 (Fisher 1978). In view of these records and the 2 recent reports for the Caribbean coast of Colombia, we anticipate more frequent records in northern South America in the near future.

#### GEOCHELIDON NILOTICA *Gull-billed Tern*

P.D. found this species fairly common at Isla Salamanca, June–August 1974 and in January 1975 (25–200 individuals) (see also Donahue 1974). M.G. and S.K. did not find it on the Caribbean coast in 1977, but saw one in Buenaventura harbour, 4 February. It was among Sandwich Terns *Sterna sandwicensis*, from which it was readily distinguished by shape, plumage, and heavy bill. Steve Hilty saw 3 there, 19 June 1975. These are the first published records of the species for Colombia, although it may breed on the coast of Ecuador (Meyer de Schauensee 1970), has recently been seen with increasing frequency along the coast of Peru (Plenge 1974), and is regular on both coasts of Panama (Ridgely 1976).

#### STERNA DOUGALLII *Roseate Tern*

P.D. observed 4–6 individuals at Isla Salamanca, 14 January 1975. M.G. and S.K. saw at least one and probably two in Cartagena harbour, 21 January 1978. The birds stood out from the numerous Common Terns in the harbour by their pure white underparts and very pale upperparts, by the reduced amount of black in the primaries, and by the longer tail streamers. The only previous record for Colombia is of a bird banded as a chick at

Great Gull Island, New York on 8 August 1969 and recovered on Gorgona Island, 28 km off the Pacific coast of Colombia, 27 October 1969 (Hays 1971). The species winters mainly on the Caribbean coast of Venezuela, off the Guyanas and off Trinidad (French 1973). It breeds on islets off the coast of Venezuela (Meyer de Schauensee *et al.* 1978) and also in the Caribbean (James Bond).

*STERNA ANAETHETUS Bridled Tern*

P.D. observed 30 on 3 July 1974 and 35 on 18 July 1974 feeding around a large rock in the harbour at Santa Marta. M.G. and S.K. saw one in Cartagena harbour on 21 January. These are the first records from the Caribbean coast of Colombia. It is known from the Pacific coast (Meyer de Schauensee 1964) and breeds on islands off the Venezuelan coast and on Aruba and Curacao (Meyer de Schauensee *et al.* 1978).

*STERNA SANDVICENSIS Sandwich Tern*

At Isla de Salamanca, P.D. saw up to 10 on 24 and 26 December 1972, one on 14 January and several on 20 January 1975. M.G. and S.K. observed 2 typical Sandwich Terns in Cartagena harbour, 21 January 1977, and with others saw 5 in Buenaventura harbour, 4 February. A Sandwich Tern banded on Cape Hatteras, North Carolina, 8 June 1975, by Jay Sheppard was recovered alive and released near Buenaventura, 29 March 1976 (W. Brown and S. Hilty). The Sandwich Tern has not been recorded previously from the Pacific coast of Colombia, but is regular off Ecuador (Meyer de Schauensee 1966) and off the Pacific coast of Panama (Ridgely 1976) and has been photographed on the Atlantic coast of Panama (E. Eisenmann). There are increasing numbers of records from the Peruvian coast throughout the year and P.D. obtained counts of up to 100 Sandwich Terns at Paracas Bay in January.

*STERNA SANDVICENSIS EURYGNATHA Cayenne Tern*

This "species" is now often treated as a subspecies of the Sandwich Tern, with which it apparently freely interbreeds (Ansingh *et al.* 1960, Voous 1968), and M.G. has seen mixed pairs in Argentina. In the Netherlands West Indies, variation in bill colour is apparently continuous (Ansingh *et al.* 1960) from typical Sandwich (black with yellow tip) to all yellow-orange, and it is probably more appropriate to consider the pure yellow-billed "Cayennes" as a somewhat localized colour-type rather than a subspecies. If the two extreme forms (Sandwich and Cayenne) are found to be more common than predicted on the basis of random interbreeding, it would be appropriate to consider these as two morphs with much interbreeding.

M.G. and S.K. saw 2 birds with black and yellow bills intermediate between Cayenne and Sandwich types in Cartagena harbour, 21 January, in the company of 2 typical Sandwich Terns. Of greater interest was a nearly typical Cayenne (with only a trace of blackish on the lower mandible) in Buenaventura harbour, 4 February, seen with 5 typical Sandwich Terns. This is the first record of this variant for the Pacific coast of South America.

*TACHY CINETA BICOLOR Tree Swallow*

P.D. observed 50-100 on Isla Salamanca, 20 January 1975. M.G. and S.K. saw 6 there, 15 January 1977, and S. Hilty and P. Alden c.10 at Riohacha 15 February 1978. Meyer de Schauensee (1964) lists only one previous

Colombian record, from the Department of Nariño, and his only other records for South America (1970) are from Guyana and Trinidad. M.G. saw flocks totalling over 100 Tree Swallows at Chichiriviche, Falcon, Venezuela, 24 January 1974, and the species occurs there quite regularly in winter (Peter Alden). This constitutes the first published record for Venezuela, since Meyer de Schauensee *et al.* (1978) do not list it at all. The species is now known to migrate through coastal Peru (at least occasionally) and to winter as far south as Salta, Argentina (Gochfeld *in prep.*). Tree Swallows occur irregularly on the Caribbean coast of Panama (E. Eisenmann).

#### TACHYGINETA sp.

At Isla Salamanca on 15 and 19 January 1977, M.G. and S.K. found flocks of up to 40 swallows with blue-green backs and white rumps which were believed to be Mangrove Swallows *Tachycineta albilinea*, but the fine white loreal mark could not be discerned. P.D. also had observed several probable Mangrove Swallows there, 24 December 1974. Confusion could exist with the White-rumped Swallow *T. leucorrhoa* of Bolivia, Paraguay, Uruguay, Brazil and Argentina, and the Chilean Swallow *T. leucopyga* of southern Chile and Argentina, but these 2 species would normally be on their southern breeding grounds during the austral summer. Although there are no records of these species north of Brazil, several *Tachycineta* sp. have been seen in Surinam in March (T. Davis). The Mangrove Swallow is not reported from Colombia or Northern South America, but is locally common in Pacific lowlands of Panama (Ridgely 1976) and a race breeds on the coast of northern Peru (Meyer de Schauensee 1970). Although the birds seen in Colombia and Surinam remain unidentified, it is certain that *Tachycineta* swallows are occurring there and merit close attention.

#### PROGNE sp. *Purple Martin*

P.D. observed up to 3 adult male Purple Martins on 22 July and 1 August 1974 at Santa Marta, a single on 1 August 1974 at Cienaga, another on 12 August 1974 at Isla de Salamanca and another on 6 August 1974 at Riohacha. The dates suggest they were of the migratory race *elegans* of the southern species, *P. modesta*, which occasionally reaches Panama at that season (E. Eisenmann; Ridgely 1976), but specimens of the Northern Purple Martin *P. subis* have been obtained from Panama in August, and as adult males of the 2 species are not separable in the field (E. Eisenmann) the identity of the Colombian martins remains uncertain.

#### DENDROICA VIRENS *Black-throated Green Warbler*

P.D. observed one above Bogota at Quebrado del Chico (now a housing development), 28 January 1973. M.G. and S.K. saw 5-6 on 16 and 17 January in the Santa Marta mountains near San Lorenzo between 1650 and 2300 m altitude. The only previous record from Colombia is also from the Santa Marta range, a bird obtained at Cincinati (about 1200 m altitude) in April (Meyer de Schauensee 1966). A bird was recently recorded in coastal Zulia, Venezuela (Meyer de Schauensee *et al.* 1978), but the species is otherwise unknown in South America.

#### SOUTH AMERICAN RESIDENT SPECIES

#### DENDROCYGNA BICOLOR *Fulvous Whistling Duck*

P.D. saw 22 at Isla Salamanca, 18 January 1974, and 6-10 there, 20 January

1975. The species is otherwise not recorded from the Caribbean coast of Colombia (see Meyer de Schauensee 1970).

ELANOIDES FORFICATUS *Swallow-tailed Kite*

P.D. saw 5 on 26 July 1974 at Parque Tayrona, east of the city of Santa Marta. It is not known to breed in Caribbean Colombia.

COCCYZUS LANSBERGI *Grey-capped Cuckoo*

With others, M.G. and S.K. saw one of this little known species near the hydroelectric plant at Yatecuy, Rio Anchicaya, Department of Valle, on the Pacific slope of the western Andes, 3 February 1977. This bird, which may have been a migrant (Koepcke 1964), was c.600 km southwest of its known range (Meyer de Schauensee 1964). It was sitting c.3 m up in a small tree at the edge of a clearing in wet tropical forest, not in "scrub" as listed by Meyer de Schauensee (1964).

CHAETURA BRACHYURA *Short-tailed Swift*

P.D. observed this species on 20 January 1975, 30 June and 18 July 1974 at Isla Salamanca. It is known from southern Colombia, but these are the first records from the Caribbean coastal region. In Panama it is now recorded with increasing frequency (Ridgely 1976) and has been found breeding by E.S. Morton (per E. Eisenmann).

LEPIDOPYGA LILLAE *Sapphire-bellied Hummingbird*

This is a "hyperendemic" species known only from mangroves near the mouth of the Magdalena River at Cienage Grande and rarely seen. P.D. identified 2 in mangroves at a new locality at the mouth of the Rio Rancheria, just east of the town of Riohacha, 6 August 1974.

MOLOTHRUS ARMENTI *Bronze-brown Cowbird*

This species was believed to be an extremely rare form from the Amazonian area near Leticia (Meyer de Schauensee 1970), apparently because the few known individuals arrived with specimens from Leticia. It is now clear that the species resides in coastal Colombia between Cartagena and Isla Salamanca. P.D. observed it on at least 5 visits to Isla Salamanca. It needs to be distinguished from the more abundant Shiny Cowbird *M. bonariensis*, and from the Bronzed Cowbird *M. aeneus* which breeds in the Canal Zone (E. Eisenmann) and which may be invading Colombia from nearby Panama. E. Eisenmann suggests that in the light of specimens sent by the late Armando Dugand, *armenti* and *aeneus* are best treated as conspecific, as they were by Blake (1968).

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## The Forest Wagtail *Motacilla indica* recorded in Nepal

by Kai Curry-Lindahl

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While visiting the Royal Chitwan National Park in southern Nepal, I got an excellent view for several hours of a Forest Wagtail *Motacilla indica* on 30 November 1979, apparently the first record for Nepal.

The bird visited a sand bank in the Rapti River in the northeastern part of the National Park and close to its Headquarters and Research Station. This temporary sand bank was located near the southern shore of the river and partially connected with a small grass covered island. No vegetation covered the bank. Other birds feeding simultaneously on the bank were Indian White Wagtails *M. alba dukhunensis* and White-faced Pied Wagtails *M. a. leucopsis*, as well as Little Ringed Plovers *Charadrius dubius*, a Kentish Plover *C. alexandrinus* and a Greenshank *Tringa nebularia*.